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Testimony of Representative Tom Reynolds
S.B. 666, An Act Concerning Safe Residential Treatment Facilities for Effective Recovery.
Public Health Committee
February 21, 2007

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Tom Reynolds, State Representative of the 42nd District (Ledyard, Montville, Preston). I wish to testify in support of Proposed S.B. 666, An Act Concerning Safe Residential Treatment Facilities for Effective Recovery.

A five-bedroom sober house in my district was home to over 20 clients in recovery, all the while receiving funds from the state, despite complaints from the town. Why were the landlord's ongoing requests for funds for increasingly more clients approved for a single sober house? Why did the state keep sending funds to a facility in gross violation of local zoning? Why was the state indifferent to the health and safety of these clients? Why was the state indifferent to the interests of the neighborhood which endured the impact that comes from any house with 20 people?

This bill would require the state to demand greater accountability from those providers receiving state funds for sober congregant living facilities. Providers must demonstrate ongoing compliance with local zoning regulations and local and state health and safety codes. They must be subject to licensing, training, on-site inspection, recertification, and other requirements, and the state must be more responsive to local complaints of illegal or inappropriate operation. As a result, we will be taking an important step in protecting the health, safety and well-being of clients served in these facilities.

The advocates of this bill and a similar bill heard last week by the Select Committee on Housing are not opposed to the siting of sober congregant living facilities in our towns. Their presence throughout the state is a critical piece in a larger strategy to transition

persons in addiction recovery to lives of independence and self-reliance in our communities. I do not even believe that municipal permission or public notification should be required. However, we are opposed to state funds being used for facilities that operate illegally by violating local zoning or operate free of accountability or standards, thus threatening clients' road to recovery and unfairly impacting host communities.

I have had numerous conversations with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), regarding this issue and the experiences we have had in eastern Connecticut. The department acknowledges the need for stricter standards and greater accountability, and I am pleased to learn that new policies and procedures are being developed along the lines we are proposing.

Thank you for your interest in this issue.